

FOOD, NUTRITION, AND CONSUMER SERVICE

SMART SNACKS IN SCHOOL

Background

On June 28, 2013 USDA issued an interim final rule to establish nutrition standards for all foods and beverages sold in schools, including food sold in vending machines and a la carte lines, as required by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA). Some have raised concerns that such standards will increase costs to schools and negatively impact industry.

Key Points:

- The changes are intended to improve the health and well-being of our Nation's children, increase consumption of healthful foods during the school day and create an environment that reinforces the development of healthy eating habits.
- The standards apply only to foods and beverages sold in school during the school day. They do not apply to afterschool or weekend sporting events, foods brought to school in bagged lunches, or birthday parties or special events including occasional bake sales and fundraisers.
- At least 39 States have already adopted some kind of competitive foods standard and industry has also begun providing healthier snack foods to schools, including many products that already meet the proposed standards. USDA's proposed rule builds on these voluntary efforts by establishing a consistent national baseline that will allow every student to enjoy the benefits of healthy snack food choices while providing greater certainty for food and beverage companies.
- Many schools have implemented their own standards with little or no loss of revenue, and some schools have reported revenue increases. Exact figures vary by State, school district, and school. But existing evidence indicates that revenue changes on a national scale would likely be minimal – in the range of one percent of total school food revenues.
- Most food companies have diverse product portfolios with healthy options that meet the proposed standards. USDA estimates the proposed standards' impact on the sales of food items would be very limited. The sale of junk food in schools represents less than one percent of all food shipments from U.S. food manufacturers.
- Finally, there is a significant transition period for these changes, and USDA is working closely with schools, parents and industry to implement the standards. The HHFKA requires that implementation take place no earlier than one complete school year after publication of an implementing rule, which will be the upcoming School Year 2014-15.